



BOOK REVIEWS

Davies, J. G., *The Early Christian Church*. "Holt History of Religion Series." New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965. xiii + 314 pp. + 24 pp. of plates. \$ 8.50.

This work is an historical treatment of the Christian church in the first five centuries. After the first two chapters, which treat "The Origins of Christianity" and "The Apostolic Age," each chapter covers approximately a century; and all the chapters, except the first, are subdivided topically into six main sections: background or environment, sources, expansion and development (including church organization), beliefs, worship, and social life. From one point of view this organization tends to fragmentize the discussion, but finds adequate compensation in that the reader can, as the author points out, "follow each section throughout" and thus have "a miniature history of the Roman empire and of the general background of the Church's growth . . . an abbreviated patrology, a consecutive account of the missionary endeavour and of internal progress and struggles; a history of Christian doctrine and of worship, and finally a short social history" (p. xii).

For a book no longer than this, the field has been surprisingly well covered. No vital item appears to have been overlooked, but in a few places we might have wished for further elaboration. On pp. 31, 32, e.g., in the subsection on "The Philosophical Schools," there is no treatment of Platonic philosophy (rather the statement is made that "neither the Academic or Platonic nor the Peripatetic or Aristotelian were much in vogue in the first century AD"), and Stoicism is dismissed with only the most cursory and generalized treatment. This is so in spite of the fact that these philosophies (as well as others not treated) furnish background not only for heresies with which the early church had to contend but also for the shaping of some of the communicative terminology (and even to some degree the thought) of various church fathers.

Again, in regard to such matters as dating Polycarp's epistle (p. 80) and the *Shepherd* of Hermas (p. 81), a further sentence or two of explanation might have been helpful. In stating that Polycarp's "*Epistle to the Philippians* probably consists of two letters," might it not have been well to have referred the reader to P. N. Harrison for details concerning this thesis and at the same time to have indicated that the view has not been universally accepted? And although the reviewer himself agrees with the author in dating the earlier portions of Hermas' *Shepherd* to the late first century and the later portions to the episcopate of Pius, he wonders if the reader should not have been alerted to the problems involved in use of the Muratorian fragment for establishing the closing terminus, and also whether the reader should

not have been informed of the basis for determining the beginning terminus.

Occasionally interpretations set forth and the way in which source materials are used may raise doubts, as *e.g.*, on pp. 61, 62, in the discussion of worship in the Apostolic Age. In a subsection dealing with the Eucharist, and after mention of the *agape*, the statement is made that "in addition to the consumption of food, there is evidence that a homily was delivered, that letters from leading Christians were read, that a collection was taken for charitable purposes, and that the worshippers exchanged a kiss of peace as a sign of their solidarity." The sources cited for various of these items (such as Acts 20:7; Col 4:16; and 1 Cor 16:2) are so random as to raise question as to their adequacy for the purpose served. In fact, one reference (1 Cor 16:2) does not even appear to refer to a public gathering. The further comment that "the meetings took place at night and, although it is impossible to determine their frequency in the earliest days, it soon became the practice to hold them once a week, early on Sunday morning, i.e. on the Lord's Day" is not sufficiently documented and ignores, as well, the work of C. W. Dugmore and other scholars whose investigations might lead one to suspect that the early Sunday morning services were Easter celebrations. Whether the quotation from *I Clement*, on p. 92, is properly used as evidence of attitude regarding monepiscopacy is also open to question.

In general, however, the author has made careful use of his sources, and the fact that he has usually provided rather thorough documentation is most helpful. The seventeen two-column pages of notes (pp. 281-97) citing the early sources are a valuable tool and provide the key to a virtual storehouse of information on the topics treated.

Unfortunately, the book evidences certain elements of inconsistency and error in the presentation of chronological items. On p. 76, *e.g.*, we are informed that "Pliny [the Younger] arrived in Bithynia on 17th September, 111," but on p. 7 we read that he was "governor of Bithynia in 110." The date "110" is also given on p. 39. If "110" were to be used at all, should it not have been "*c.* 110"? But perhaps "*c.* 111" or "*c.* 112" would have been better still. Again, on p. 80 we read that "Polycarp visited Rome to confer with bishop Anicetus, *c.* 154," whereas on p. 91 we discover that "in 155 Polycarp discussed the matter in Rome with Anicetus." Even if the "154" were a misprint (the context does not seem to indicate so), one would still wonder why the "*c.*" was used in one place and not the other. The question of the date of Anicetus is further complicated, however, in that in reading this book one would assume that a chronology is used which places Anicetus' accession in 154 or 155, whereas on p. 81 the dates given for Anicetus' immediate predecessor Pius are "*c.* 140-50" (Pius actually reigned for about 15 years). Another chronological item which may be questioned is the statement on p. 73 that "Valentinus stayed for some ten years in Rome (160-170)." Is there not evidence (*e.g.*, Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.*, iii. 4.3) that he actually arrived there some two decades

earlier? And in any event, would not an item of this type have been an appropriate place for the use of the "c."?

Admittedly, many dates in early church history cannot be determined precisely, but care should be taken to present chronological information as accurately as possible and with the use of a fairly consistent style. Otherwise the reader may become confused.

On the whole, however, this volume affords an excellent introduction to early church history and is basically reliable and authoritative. Criticisms such as those above do not detract significantly from its real value. An excellent bibliography and the section of plates enhance its worth still further.

Andrews University

KENNETH A. STRAND

Froom, LeRoy Edwin, *The Conditionalist Faith of Our Fathers: The Conflict of the Ages Over the Nature and Destiny of Man*. Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald, 1966. Vol. I, 1132 pp. \$ 15.00.

The second volume of this work, which appeared in 1965, was reviewed in *AUSS*, IV (July, 1966), 193-200. The present volume carries the subtitle, "The Biblical Norm and the Origin, Development, and Penetration of Innate Immortality (900 B.C. to A.D. 500)."

The first part of the book is devoted to the Old Testament (pp. 29-180): the creation of man; the fall of man, with death as punishment; the plan of redemption (brilliantly set forth); and an examination of Biblical terms which exclude the idea of innate immortality. The second part (pp. 183-519) produces the testimony of Jesus, sets forth the teaching of Paul and the other apostles, discusses controversial passages, and analyzes those terms which serve to designate the soul and the spirit, the Greek words translated "eternal," "immortal," "incorruptible," etc. The third part (pp. 529-754) traces the origin of the idea of natural immortality in Greece. The weakest sections here, in my view, are those concerned with the infiltration of Hellenic thought into post-exilic Judaism. The fourth part (pp. 757-1079) shows how the Biblical doctrine of conditional immortality struggled against the invasion of philosophical ideas until about A.D. 500, finally succumbing temporarily to ideas of pagan origin. The volume includes two interesting appendices (pp. 1081-1086), one on the relation between late Jewish literature and the early Christian Fathers and the other on Irenaeus' teaching on the immortality of the soul. The work is equipped with a knowledgeable bibliography and a useful index. Seven charts prepared with great care make it possible for the reader to follow the vicissitudes of the truth concerning the nature of man across the centuries.

While one cannot but admire the erudition and the tone of conviction with which Froom writes, several questions have arisen in the mind of this reviewer. Recognizing that a Latin, such as the present writer is,